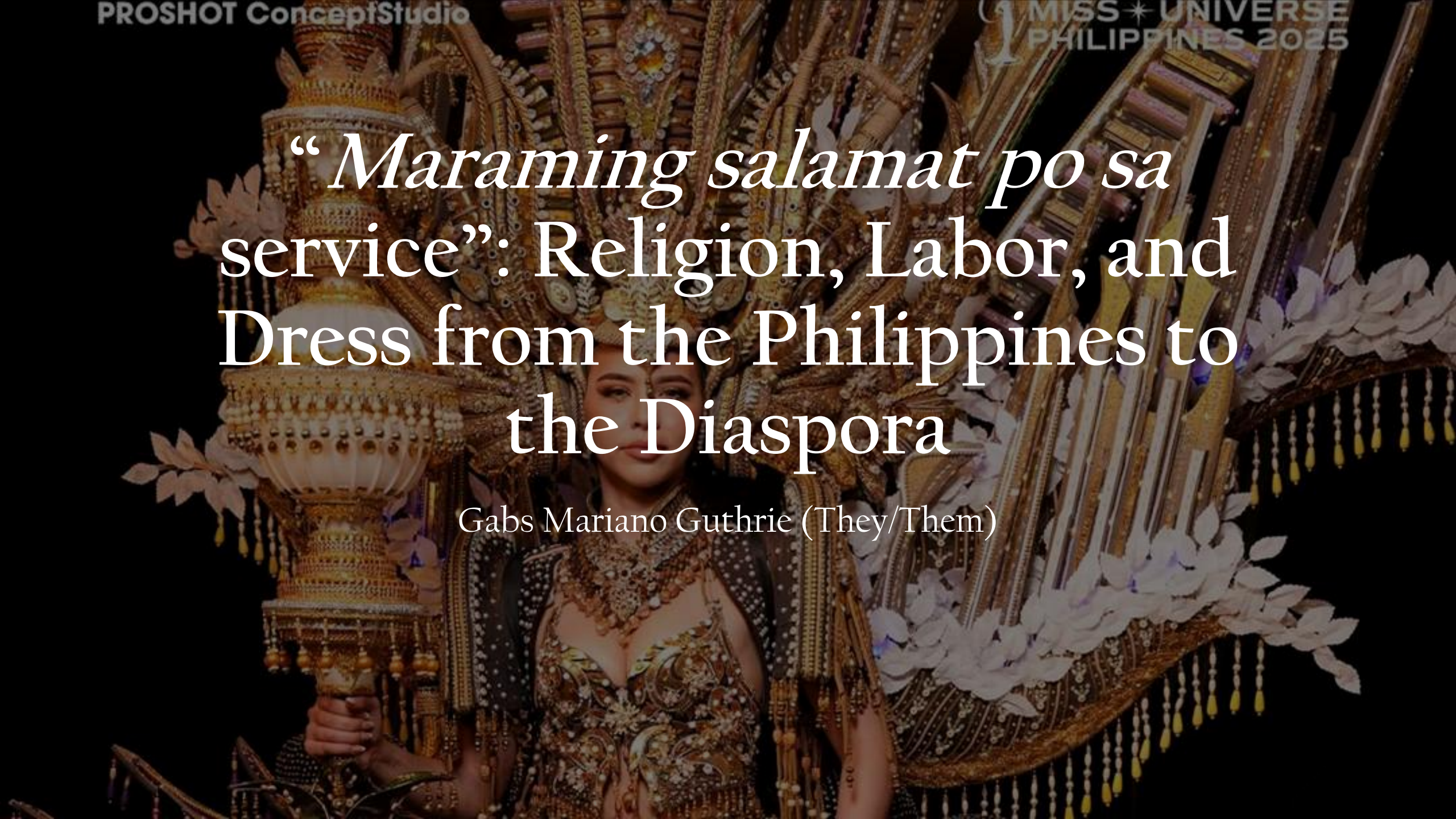


*“Maraming salamat po sa
service”*: Religion, Labor, and
Dress from the Philippines to
the Diaspora

Gabs Mariano Guthrie (They/Them)



Brief Overview

- **Study:** I am interested in how the *terno* exists in Filipinx American diasporic space within the continued histories of traditional national and ethnic dress and how this affects the dress' relationships with gendered bodies.
- **Methods:** Content analysis using fifteen online resources (blogs, newspapers, and magazines).

National Dress of the Philippines

Terno

- Traditionally worn by women
- Traditionally made of piña but other silks were also used.
- Known for its starched flat-sided “Butterfly sleeves”



When Can I be Filipino?

“Many of us reserve Filipiniana for special occasions... Until recently, I never questioned why we compartmentalize our closets, Filipino fashion on one side and everyday clothes on another, since we don’t lose our identity for the rest of the calendar year.” – *Cambio & Co.*

- Clothing ≠ Identity
- However, this way of organizing our wardrobe can lead us to thinking that what is “Filipino” is less “valuable” or “useful”



Combatting Colonial Mentality

“Influenced by Spanish taste, parts of Philippine society adapted to clothing that was made from finer and lighter materials such as the pineapple fiber or *piña*. Pineapples were imported from South America to the Philippines during the Manila Galleon trade, and weaving and embroidering pineapple fiber became a distinctly Filipino artform.” – *Narra Studio*.

- Acknowledging the continuing effects of colonization
- Emphasis on hybridity and resistance



T'nalak weavers working with Narra Studios



Magdalena Gamayo a master inabel weaver

Transnational Identity Making

“*Kapwa* is a recognition of a shared identity, an inner self, shared with others. This Filipino linguistic unity of the self and the other is unique and unlike in most modern languages. Why? Because implied in such inclusiveness is the moral obligation to treat one another as equal fellow human beings. If we can do this – even starting in our own family or our circle of friends – we are on the way to practice peace. We are Kapwa People.” – Virgilio Enriquez.

- Building transnational networks of communication and connection
- Recognizing labor struggles as a global phenomenon



Weaving map of the Philippines

Nicole Angeline in her *terno*.

Queering Womanhood

“...the most visible examples of "beauty" in Philippine fashion and popular culture center around traditionally European characteristics: fair-skinned, slim, lighter eyes, sharper nose, oval shape faces. I cannot call myself any of these... As a woman, I have grown to accept that the beauty standards of the Philippines do not define my own beauty, and I hope to convey that message to anyone who may have felt similarly about their own body. To take the terno, make it myself, and wear it proudly is the ultimate declaration of the terno belonging to members of the Philippine diaspora of all shapes and sizes. That's why it's important to me” – Nicole Angeline, *Seamwork.com*.

- Deconstruct the racial/ethnic hierarchies that arose during Spanish colonization
- Resist Spanish Catholic notions of femininity

Drag queen Marina Summers in *terno* for *DragRacePH*.



Heritage as Resistance

“I didn't realize that it was until, you know, maybe a few years ago where I'm like, why am I so attracted to this? And why am I so sustainable? Why do I worry about it so much? I mean, we're an archipelago, like we only have so much on the islands. And I think that that was really just passed down to me of just like, no waste, you know?” – Celeste Malvar-Stewart.

- Wearing heritage is only one small part of resistance
- We must combat the material conditions that oppress us



Conclusions

- The *terno* is a gateway to connection
- Designers in the Filipinx diaspora are utilizing the *terno* for their political activism
- Let the *terno* be an entryway towards a revolutionary mindset

Remaining Questions:

- What does it mean to have representation for indigenous weaving communities?
- Is the *terno* truly separate from a capitalist/European fashion system?
- Can the relationship to clothing designers are trying to cultivate to the *terno* be applied to fashion universally?





Thanks for
Listening
Maraming Salamat